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FM USDEL FEST TWO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0001  
INFO RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE IMMEDIATE 0001  
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0001  
RUEHGI/AMEMBASSY BANGUI 0001  
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0001  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0001  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0001  
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 0001  
RUFGAID/USEUCOM INTEL VAIHINGEN GE  
RUCQIES/SOCOM IESS MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0001  
RHEFDHP/DIA DHP-1 WASHINGTON DC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0001  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0001  
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 0001  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0001  
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 0001  
RUCNESB/USDEL FEST TWO 0007

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [CASC](#) [SU](#) [CD](#)

SUBJECT: NDJAMENA 001: AN EERIE NORMALCY RETURNS

¶1. Summary: Life is slowly returning to what passes for normal in N'Djamena as Chadian citizens emerge from hiding or flight to view the newest scars on this historically war-torn city. The U.S. Embassy transferred operations from a temporary site at the French base to the Chancery and other facilities on February 13. The Emergency Action Committee (EAC) met February 16 and confirmed the Embassy's current security posture. End summary.

¶2. The U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena, Chad marked the transfer of operations from a temporary site at the French base to the Chancery on February 13 with a small flag-raising ceremony. The Embassy is on Ordered Departure; twenty one staff members (including a six-man Marine Guard Detachment) are on the ground. The Consular Section is open for American Citizen Services only; visa applicants are being directed to Paris or Yaounde. No lives were lost or injuries reported among Embassy American or Locally Engaged Staff (LES). The first order of business is to survey damaged property (full report septel). At least four Embassy residences were looted and vandalized and are uninhabitable. The Chancery and the Ambassador's residence sustained limited machine gun, mortar and RPG damage. Until classified systems are up and running, all classified communications will be via EACT (cable address: USDEL FEST TWO).

¶3. Elsewhere in the city, a brisk clean-up has removed much of the debris from the heavy fighting of February 2-3. All dead bodies have been picked up. Nonetheless, the signs of war are still very evident. Burnt and overturned vehicles line the streets. Almost every window of the landmark Central African Bank's multi-story glass-fronted building was damaged. Numerous buildings along the main commercial street, Rue Charles de Gaulle, show signs of bombardment and are scorched by fire. The trees which formerly graced the street lie toppled. Many Chadian government offices were sacked, including the Ministries of Health, Education and Foreign Affairs. A visit to the MFA showed room after room of devastation -- papers tossed to the four winds, office equipment such as air conditioners and computers deliberately vandalized and left unusable. Reportedly even the Minister of Foreign Affairs' arm chair was stolen. International organizations such as UNICEF and CARE were also looted. The French Cultural Center was completely destroyed -- a major loss to Chad's cultural patrimony. Looting appears to be the work of local residents; no claims of rebel looting have

been made.

¶4. According to the French Ambassador, French forces in Chad evacuated 1,800 citizens belonging to 66 different nationalities. The French Embassy (which also sustained damage during the fighting) did not oblige employees or family members to depart, but in the event, almost all family members requested to leave. The French School is scheduled to re-open on March 10 after an extended mid-winter break. Enrollment is expected to drop considerably, as many French children (including the son of the Ambassador) will not return.

¶5. The Government declared a 15 day State of Emergency for the entire country on Thursday, February 13. A 12:30 am -06:00 a.m. curfew is in place. The main news sources -- Radio France International and BBC World Service -- can only be picked up on short wave. Some local radio stations are broadcasting. Air France has resumed limited service. Humanitarian air flights servicing the refugee camps in eastern Chad continue, but are being staged from Yaounde rather than N'Djamena.

¶6. Chadians - including many LES family members - are trickling back from Kousseri, Cameroon, which, lying a short distance from N'Djamena, across a bridge over the Chari River, was the location of choice for evacuation (although many simply hunkered down in their residences). Remarkably, casualties were relatively low. According to Thomas Merkelbach, International Red Cross (ICRC) Director, the death tally is probably about 500, with 120 picked up in the streets, and the remainder disposed of either by the Chadian Army (ANT) or the rebels. Of those bodies picked up in town, about two thirds were combatants - the remainder civilians, of which many were probably looters shot by the ANT. Merkelbach thought that wounded probably numbered 1,000. He said that there were some 120 prisoners and

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that the ICRC had been allowed full visitation rights.

¶7. Embassy security posture: The Emergency Action Committee (EAC) met February 16 and confirmed the Embassy's current security posture. A curfew of 7:00 pm - 6:00 am is in effect for Embassy staff. Travel through the city is limited to official business, in convoy where possible, and should be notified by radio to Post One.  
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